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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 2. This sheet, which includes Figs. 2 and 2a, replaces the original sheet including Figs. 2 and 2a. In Fig. 2, label "WL" has been changed to --WW--.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

REMARKS

The office action of July 9, 2008, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that the drawings are objected to on various grounds.

Claims 1-7 are objected to for containing various informalities.

Claims 1-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over the patent to Frommann et al. in view of the patent to Kondo et al.

In connection with the Examiner's objections to the drawings, applicant has amended the specification to correct the last line of page 8 to refer to the rolling mill "WW". Also, applicant has attached a replacement sheet containing Fig. 2, in which one of the elements has been amended to be labeled "WW".

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the objections to the drawings are overcome and should be withdrawn.

In view of the Examiner's rejections of the claims, applicant has canceled claims 2 and 3, and amended claims 1 and 4-7.

Applicant has amended the claims to address to informalities pointed out by the Examiner. In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the objections to the claims are overcome and should be withdrawn.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims presently on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous manner from the constructions disclosed in the references.

Turning now to the references and particularly to the patent to Frommann et al., it can be seen that this patent discloses a method of making hot roller steel strip from continuously cast ingots.

The patent to Kondo et al. discloses a stainless steel pipe manufacturing method.

The Examiner combined these references in determining that claims 1-7 would be unpatentable over such a combination.

Applicant respectfully submits that neither of these references, nor their combination, teach an installation for producing hot-rolled steel strip as in the present invention. The primary reference deals with steel strip, whereas the present invention deals with steel slabs. There is an important difference between the handling of strip and slabs. While it is easy to design a product line with sufficient residence and buffer time when having two coiler stations, it is difficult to design a line for slabs.

Coiling and uncoiling takes time and the transportation of the coils through a reheating furnace adds additional time before further proceeding, i.e. entering the roughing train or finishing train. One must also consider that the equalization of the temperature through the coil takes a great deal of time as well.

The transportation of slabs between the casting line and the mills must be carried out in a shorter time. As the reheating of the slabs combined with the equalization of temperature is necessary, the complete reduction line must be designed taking into consideration these parameters. The presently claimed invention provides a solution to these problems, and specifically, the distance between the casting line and the pass line is designed in such a way that a sufficient residence and buffering

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time for the thin slabs in the reheating furnace is guaranteed.

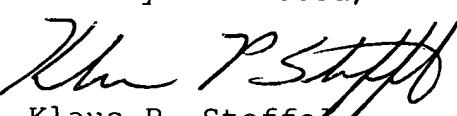
Such a construction is not taught by the references.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over a combination of the above-discussed references is overcome and should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with this application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on October 9, 2008.

By: Klaus P. Stoffel
Klaus P. Stoffel

Date: October 9, 2008